Assembly Bill No. 2429

CHAPTER 348

An act to amend Section 1375.7 of the Health and Safety Code, relating to health care service plans.

[Approved by Governor August 27, 2004. Filed with Secretary of State August 30, 2004.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2429, Chavez. Health Care Providers' Bill of Rights.

Existing law, the Knox-Keene Health Care Service Plan Act of 1975 (the Knox-Keene Act), provides for the licensure and regulation of health care service plans by the Department of Managed Health Care. Under the Knox-Keene Act, the Health Care Providers' Bill of Rights prohibits a contract between a health care service plan and a health care provider from including a term authorizing the plan to change a material term of the contract unless the parties have agreed to it or it is required to comply with state or federal law or with accreditation requirements of a private sector accreditation organization.

This bill would exempt a contract from this prohibition if it is between a noninstitutional provider and a health care service plan that provides benefits to enrollees or subscribers covered under the Medi-Cal or Healthy Families programs and compensates the provider on a fee-for-service basis and extends to the provider specified rights to negotiate the change and to terminate the contract.

Because the bill would specify additional requirements under the Knox-Keene Act, the violation of which would be a crime, it would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 1375.7 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

1375.7. (a) This section shall be known and may be cited as the Health Care Providers' Bill of Rights.

(b) No contract issued, amended, or renewed on or after January 1, 2003, between a plan and a health care provider for the provision of health care services to a plan enrollee or subscriber shall contain any of the following terms:

(1) (A) Authority for the plan to change a material term of the contract, unless the change has first been negotiated and agreed to by the provider and the plan or the change is necessary to comply with state or federal law or regulations or any accreditation requirements of a private sector accreditation organization. If a change is made by amending a manual, policy, or procedure document referenced in the contract, the plan shall provide 45 business days' notice to the provider, and the provider has the right to negotiate and agree to the change. If the plan and the provider cannot agree to the change to a manual, policy, or procedure document, the provider has the right to terminate the contract prior to the implementation of the change. In any event, the plan shall provide at least 45 business days' notice of its intent to change a material term, unless a change in state or federal law or regulations or any accreditation requirements of a private sector accreditation organization requires a shorter timeframe for compliance. However, if the parties mutually agree, the 45-business day notice requirement may be waived. Nothing in this subparagraph limits the ability of the parties to mutually agree to the proposed change at any time after the provider has received notice of the proposed change.

(B) If a contract between a provider and a plan provides benefits to enrollees or subscribers through a preferred provider arrangement, the contract may contain provisions permitting a material change to the contract by the plan if the plan provides at least 45 business days' notice to the provider of the change and the provider has the right to terminate the contract prior to the implementation of the change.

(C) If a contract between a noninstitutional provider and a plan provides benefits to enrollees or subscribers covered under the Medi-Cal or Healthy Families program and compensates the provider on a fee-for-service basis, the contract may contain provisions permitting a material change to the contract by the plan, if the following requirements are met:

(i) The plan gives the provider a minimum of 90 business days' notice of its intent to change a material term of the contract.

(ii) The plan clearly gives the provider the right to exercise his or her intent to negotiate and agree to the change within 30 business days of the provider's receipt of the notice described in clause (i).

(iii) The plan clearly gives the provider the right to terminate the contract within 90 business days from the date of the provider's receipt of the notice described in clause (i) if the provider does not exercise the

right to negotiate the change or no agreement is reached, as described in clause (ii).

(iv) The material change becomes effective 90 business days from the date of the notice described in clause (i) if the provider does not exercise his or her right to negotiate the change, as described in clause (ii), or to terminate the contract, as described in clause (iii).

(2) A provision that requires a health care provider to accept additional patients beyond the contracted number or in the absence of a number if, in the reasonable professional judgment of the provider, accepting additional patients would endanger patients' access to, or continuity of, care.

(3) A requirement to comply with quality improvement or utilization management programs or procedures of a plan, unless the requirement is fully disclosed to the health care provider at least 15 business days prior to the provider executing the contract. However, the plan may make a change to the quality improvement or utilization management programs or procedures at any time if the change is necessary to comply with state or federal law or regulations or any accreditation requirements of a private sector accreditation organization. A change to the quality improvement or utilization management programs or procedures shall be made pursuant to paragraph (1).

(4) A provision that waives or conflicts with any provision of this chapter. A provision in the contract that allows the plan to provide professional liability or other coverage or to assume the cost of defending the provider in an action relating to professional liability or other action is not in conflict with, or in violation of, this chapter.

(5) A requirement to permit access to patient information in violation of federal or state laws concerning the confidentiality of patient information.

(c) (1) When a contracting agent sells, leases, or transfers a health provider's contract to a payor, the rights and obligations of the provider shall be governed by the underlying contract between the health care provider and the contracting agent.

(2) For purposes of this subdivision, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

(A) ''Contracting agent'' has the meaning set forth in paragraph (2) of subdivision (d) of Section 1395.6.

(B) ''Payor'' has the meaning set forth in paragraph (3) of subdivision (d) of Section 1395.6.

(d) Any contract provision that violates subdivision (b) or (c) shall be void, unlawful, and unenforceable.

(e) The department shall compile the information submitted by plans pursuant to subdivision (h) of Section 1367 into a report and submit the

report to the Governor and the Legislature by March 15 of each calendar year.

(f) Nothing in this section shall be construed or applied as setting the rate of payment to be included in contracts between plans and health care providers.

(g) For purposes of this section the following definitions apply:

(1) ''Health care provider'' means any professional person, medical group, independent practice association, organization, health care facility, or other person or institution licensed or authorized by the state to deliver or furnish health services.

(2) ''Material'' means a provision in a contract to which a reasonable person would attach importance in determining the action to be taken upon the provision.

SEC. 2. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.

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